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IS TROPICAL COLONIZATION JUSTIFIABLE?

In a recent address before the American Historical Association, Mr. Charles Francis Adams said: "After three rounded centuries of British rule, the Hindus are in 1900 less capable of independent and ordered self-government than they were in the year 1600, when the East India Company was incorporated under a patent of Elizabeth. What is true of India is true of Egypt. Schools, roads, irrigation, law and order, and protection from attack, she has them all—

'But what avail the plow or sail
Or land or life, if freedom fail.'

A formidable proposition, I state it without limitations, meaning to challenge contradiction, I submit that there is not an instance in all recorded history, from the earliest precedent to that now making, where a so-called inferior race or community has been elevated in its character, or made self-sustaining and self-governing, or even put on the way to that result, through a condition of dependency or tutelage."

We may fairly draw from the above passage and from its context one or two principles which appear to guide Mr. Adams in his consideration of colonial problems:

1. That self-government, in other words the absence of foreign dictation in all matters relating to the development

of a country and a people, is the great prime requisite for success.

2. That success for a nation means the achievement of the capacity for independent and ordered self-government.

3. That "schools, roads, irrigation, law and 'order,'" are admirable, not by virtue of their inherent excellence, but simply through the means by which they are attained.

If we subject these principles, and others contained in Mr. Adams's address, to a critical examination, we find that the arguments against the direction of the affairs of one people by another are precisely those which are advanced by anarchists against the regulation of an individual's actions within a state or society by other members of that state or society. "The absence of murder and pillage in a community," says the anarchist, "is no doubt to be desired. But if it is obtained by coercion, that is by a police force and a criminal code, it is of no avail, since the desirable condition does not rest on the development of the moral consciousness of the criminal, but on the forcible direction of his activities into other channels. To paraphrase Mr. Adams: 'A so-called inferior section of a community cannot be elevated in its character or made capable of ordered self-government through a condition of tutelage.' "

The reply may be made to this comparison that the larger interests of a community justify the restraint placed by a criminal code on the actions of some of its members, but that no such justification exists for interference in the actions of the members of foreign communities.

This view is a narrow one, based upon insufficient appreciation of the interdependence of the different peoples of the earth, and is a view for which no support can be adduced in the practice of nations from the earliest times. To go back no further than four centuries, we can see how such a view, if consistently acted upon by nations, would have interfered with the development of the world. The United States would to-day be governed by a few thousand Indians, the

Australian continent by a few hundreds of cannibals, India would still be torn by internal dissensions; there would be no Suez Canal; the Malay Peninsula, the Archipelago and the China Seas would still be closed to the world by the Malay and Chinese pirates; Central and South America, instead of struggling as it is to-day to become capable of ordered self-government under its various alleged republics, would still be lying, as it had done for thousands of years, idle and unprofitable under the dominion of a few tribes of wandering Caribs.

This would be very well if we could alter the whole conditions of human life, if we could say to the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Russia and all other nations: "Your population is now large enough for your territory; you must not increase any further, because if you do two things will happen: you will seek your food supply in foreign lands and your people will emigrate, and both these things will bring you into contact with people who, although they unprofitably occupy great tracts of the earth and live, for the most part, in a condition of savagery, must not be disturbed in their possession of the land they are, at once by their mere occupation and by their lack of ordered government, withholding from the general use of mankind." But there never has been a time in recorded history when this policy of no intercourse was possible. And if there is to be intercourse between the so-called inferior races and the superior races, only one of two things is possible, either the native government must change itself so as to meet the requirements of the new conditions, or some one else must effect the change. In almost every instance it has been found that commercial intercourse with an inferior race has meant the acquisition in the first place of small grants on which trading stations might be established; that this has inevitably led to friction between the newcomers and the natives; that as a matter of protection the original tract under foreign occupation has been enlarged, until the impos-

sibility of two forms of government existing side by side on the same territory has led to the overthrow of the native system.

It seems incredible that the history of the expansion of nations during the past three thousand years should have left us with no data on which a theory of expansion may be formulated. As a matter of fact, the lesson of history is singularly clear on the point of what will happen when a nation reaches a certain stage of growth, although it is silent as to the question whether such happenings accord with this or that theory of ethics. For three thousand years there has not been a single nation of any importance which has not had colonies. The degree of control exercised by the mother country has varied in different instances, but in every case the people of one country have gone to another country, have established themselves there, have taken over the administration of the territory in which they lived, and this without in any way considering whether the natives had the moral right to shut their country off from intercourse with the rest of the world or to insist on the acceptance by the newcomers of the native system of government. What are these nations which have colonized, these nations which, according to Mr. Adams's view, have all been mistaken in their sense of right and wrong? Phœnicia, Carthage, Rome, Greece, Amalfi, Pisa, Genoa, Florence, Venice, Portugal, Spain, Holland, France, Great Britain, Russia, Germany, Italy, the United States, China, Japan, Turkey, Denmark—limited monarchies, absolute monarchies, and republics. It would seem indeed that the whole civilized world had at all times been in the wrong on the question of colonial empire.

Further, if Mr. Adams's view that foreign domination, however beneficent in its operation, emasculates a people and renders them unable to achieve a condition of ordered self-government, then surely we may confidently seek for progress and good government in those countries which have

been least subjected to foreign dominion. In Europe the country which has been in the smallest degree subjected to foreign dominion is Russia, yet we can hardly hold up Russia as an example, either in regard to the form or methods of its government. In Asia the country which has been least affected by foreign control is China, yet we can scarcely accept China as our model of government. On the American continent the two governments which stand far ahead of all others are those of the United States and Canada, yet each is the result of the intrusion of methods foreign to the native inhabitants of those territories. In the Pacific there is probably no country which has been less subjected to foreign dominion than Southwestern Borneo, and it was here that a French scientific expedition was recently captured and eaten. As a matter of fact, in regard to those portions of the world with which colonization is chiefly concerned to-day, the tropics and the sub-tropics, the very reverse of Mr. Adams's proposition is true; the worst governed portions are those which have been least under foreign dominion, and the degree of good government in the others is in inverse proportion to the amount of influence exerted on the administration by the original inhabitants.

It may perhaps be said in support of Mr. Adams's view that the whole affair is a matter of time; that if we only wait long enough the Papuan, the Sioux, the Dyack and the Zulu will develop political institutions, even as those of the United States. And if it is answered that all these people had been thousands of years at it before ever a white man interfered with them, and had not up to that time succeeded in advancing a single step towards what we call ordered self-government, the reply may be offered that they merely need thousands of years more. This is an abstract and hypothetical question. Had the Zulu been left to himself, it is of course conceivable he might have advanced in civilization during the nineteenth century a hundred times as far as he had advanced when left to himself during the twenty cen-

turies that preceded it, or if he were now left to himself for a hundred years Zululand might yet become the seat of the world's highest learning and most perfect political institutions by the year 2000. The point of the matter is that all these so-called inferior races have had just as much time as the superior races in which to get into a state of ordered and civilized government, and that up to the time when the white man first went amongst them scarcely a step forward had been made anywhere; and that as the superior races now want these portions of the earth, so that they may draw their supplies from them and develop the resources which have been placed there by nature, we cannot wait upon the distant hope, a hope which is discounted by thousands of years of history, that the people of these regions will of their own accord establish such conditions of law and order as to make intercourse with them practicable for foreigners.

Another matter which should influence our attitude towards tropical colonization is the question of climate. There is a perfect readiness on all sides to accept the limitations placed on the progress of civilization by extreme cold, but the similar operation of extreme heat is a fact that people are most unwilling to admit. No one expects that a highly organized community will arise in Greenland or in Terra del Fuego; but that a tropical jungle may blossom forth into a mother of parliaments appears to be within the capacity of many peoples' faith

Yet if we study the history of civilization, we are at once confronted with the fact that a temperate climate has been the one great condition of progress, and that extreme heat as well as extreme cold has for more than a thousand years proved an insuperable barrier to advancement. What contributions have the tropics made to human progress during the past thousand years? Have they produced a single poet of the first rank, or a painter, or a musician, or an engineer, or a chemist, or a historian, or a statesman, or any man of the first eminence in any single art or science? Are

we indebted to them for a single important invention, or for any new discovery in any branch of inquiry? Have they, during the past ten centuries, contributed a single great idea to the sum of human knowledge? The answer to all these questions is in the negative.

Now, if we take the tropics and sub-tropics to include that portion of the earth's surface which lies between 30° N. and 30° S., we have a belt 3,600 miles wide running round the world and containing a very large proportion of the land surface of the earth and a great proportion of the world's population. We cannot be expected to believe that the entire dearth of progress for a thousand years amongst the millions of inhabitants of this vast territory (except in so far as it has been introduced from outside the belt) is due to mere accident. It must be due to some deep-seated cause acting through centuries. This law has been admirably stated by Buckle in his "Introduction to the History of Civilization in England." Buckle's argument, in condensed form, is that civilization in tropical countries depends, and has always depended, on the relation between nature and its own productiveness. But under such conditions the extent to which man can advance his general condition is very limited, since the relation between nature and its own productiveness is a fixed one; and under these circumstances man is dominated by his physical environment. In non-tropical countries, on the other hand, progress depends and always has depended on the relation between external nature and the activity and energy of man; and advancement in these regions has been in direct relation to the extent to which man has risen superior to his physical environment. The march of the centuries has shown, however, that this relation is by no means a fixed one, and that it is impossible to place any limit to the power of man to increase, from the resources of his own mind, his independence of physical conditions. The conclusion is obvious. The inferior peoples

are those whose race characteristics have been acquired during centuries of enforced submission to physical environment, centuries during which the active powers of the mind have become atrophied. The superior peoples are those whose slow and painful ascent of the ladder of progress has been accomplished by a gradual strengthening of man's intellectual faculties and a corresponding decrease in the tyrannical power of external nature. It has become the fashion in recent years to disparage Buckle, but, except in a few minor details, his theory in regard to the evolution of civilization remains unshaken.

Passing now to another view in regard to problems of tropical colonization, it is interesting to observe the peculiarly independent line of thought that has been adopted by a great many Americans as to the value of foreign experiences in the government of tropical dependencies.

When we reflect that the study of political economy and sociology is made up almost entirely of the examination and analysis of the available facts in relation to the condition and government of the various peoples of the world, it seems extraordinary that so many people of good education, in the United States, should reject utterly the idea that a study of the colonial methods of England, France and Holland would afford a valuable groundwork for the solution of the Philippine problem. Yet many statesmen, legislators, teachers, business men and others, are still of the opinion that the experience of England in the Malay states, of Holland in Java, and of France in Indo-China, is of no interest or value for the United States because none of the other peoples who had faced the problem of tropical administration were Americans. "This is a problem for which the American people will find an American solution," seems to be the firm belief of a large number of influential Americans.

Perhaps this very independence bespeaks ultimate success.

One cannot help feeling, however, that it will end in the final adoption of a policy not greatly dissimilar to that of other nations, and that in the meantime the frontal attack method will have wasted a great deal of time, a great deal of money, and many valuable lives.

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